SPIRITUAL HOUSECLEANING

IT was Sunday morning, and Marjorie Edgeworth was making no preparation to go to church. "Why, Marjorie," said her mother, "aren't you going with us to-day?"

"No," replied Marjorie, "I don't think I'll go any more until Lent. You know I always eat, sleep and dream church during Lent. It's a sort of annual housecleaning of the soul for me, and I don't think a few weeks' absence before Lent will hurt any."

Her mother, who looked a little sad and somewhat puzzled, said, "I'm afraid you can't take care of your soul the way you do a house, Marjorie. Of course we can't live in a religious fervor all the time. It would be abnormal, and we'd soon burn out. But your idea of storing up religion from some special season for lean months of neglect afterwards won't stand a very rigid scrutiny. The soul is more like the body in its demands than it is like a house.

"You remember the children of Israel had to gather their manna fresh every day in the wilderness. When they tried to lay up a supply for the future it spoiled. God meant to teach them by that, it seems to me, that they must recognize their dependence day by day upon Him. I'm afraid it's the same with the concerns of the soul. You can't eat food enough to sustain your body for a week or a month; neither can you so feed your soul by a special season of religion that it will require no daily nourishment in the succeeding days."

"What does Lent mean, then?" asked Marjorie. "I always thought it was a spring housecleaning for your soul, and that you needn't be so regular in your devotions for a while before and after."

"That is because you have misinterpreted the season, dear," her mother replied. "You are thinking of it under the wrong symbolism. Lent is a season for serious stock taking. Stores take stock once a year to find out where they stand. So should we in matters of the soul. As we dwell upon the sacrifice of Jesus, we should sit down at the foot of the cross, so to speak, and ask ourselves what our gains and losses have been, spiritually speaking, since the last Lenten season. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, stands in the church calendar as a day of penitence. It assumes that we have been taking stock and are grieved over the spiritual losses that our self-examination has disclosed. So you see, Lent is not a spring housecleaning for the soul, but a season of spiritual reckonings and high aspirations from which we go forth humbled and chastened to give still more attention to spiritual things."

"I never thought of it in that way before," said Marjorie. "I think I'd better begin to get ready now for Lent, if I don't want to be too much ashamed when Ash Wednesday comes. I'll start by going upstairs to dress for church."

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